

## 1/10/2005 This Week in Congress

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January 10, 2005

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find it useful.

A New Year, A New Congress

As we begin a new year and a new Congress, I look forward to working in 2005 on the issues important to Kansans. This week, I was sworn in for my fifth term as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. During the 109th Congress, I will continue working to ensure that our agricultural heritage remains intact and economically viable and that all Kansans-especially in rural communities-have better access to quality, affordable health care. Additionally, I will work with my colleagues in Congress toward passage of a comprehensive transportation plan that addresses the needs of all Americans, as well as a host of other issues.

My committee assignments will not change. I will remain on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee; the House Agriculture Committee, where I will remain Chairman of the Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management; and the House Veterans Affairs Committee, where I will continue to serve as Vice Chairman of the Subcommittee on Health.

I am hopeful that, with the new Congress and the passage of the election, we can work toward a new level of civility in Washington, D.C. that will allow us to address the important issues facing our nation. In addition, I will continue to travel throughout the district, talking to Kansans about their concerns and thoughts.

I am honored to serve as Congressman from the First Congressional District. By working together, I am confident that the new year will bring great things for the people of Kansas and America.

### House Repeals Ethics Rule Change

This week, the House adopted rules to govern the 109th Congress and took a necessary step in repealing a change to the House ethics rules that eliminated the requirement for any House leader to step down from leadership should that person be indicted of a felony. I had serious concerns about this initial change. When the 109th Congress reconvened earlier this week, I joined my colleagues in supporting the repeal of this change and stopping further erosion of the House ethics rules.

For our system of government to work, elected officials must be held to a certain level of conduct in order to best represent those who elected them. The rules that govern that conduct must meet the highest standards. I am proud of my colleagues for saying "no" to these rule changes.

## Tsunami Support-Tax Extension

On Thursday, the House and Senate passed H.R. 241. This legislation allows taxpayers to deduct in 2004 charitable cash contributions made in January 2005 for the relief of victims in areas affected by the December 26, 2004, Indian Ocean tsunami. H.R. 241 now goes to the President to be signed into law. For more information, please visit the Internal Revenue Service website at <http://www.irs.gov/>.

## Agriculture Roundup

## Drought Assistance

This week I visited with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and encouraged them to deliver the drought assistance that Congress passed last October as quickly as possible. Producers in Kansas who have experienced multiple years of drought are struggling to make ends meet. I was pleased that Congress provided assistance for disasters in 2003 and 2004, but as producers plan for next year's crops and prepare for tax season, it is vital to deliver this assistance quickly.

## Canadian Beef Imports

This week, I have heard from many producers about the USDA's rule to allow live cattle into the U.S. from Canada by March. Beef producers provide a critical component of the Kansas economy, and I feel that opening our export markets to Japan and other Asian nations is imperative. I will continue to closely monitor the situation as it unfolds and support the long-term viability of cattle producers.

## Supporting Our Troops

As we begin 2005, it is important to remember the brave men and women that are far away from home. From the sands of Iraq to the mountains of Afghanistan, our soldiers are defending our nation in the War on Terror. I would encourage you to take a moment and reach out to our troops by doing what you can to show them you care. Signs of support take many forms, but the Department of Defense has pooled these various forms of support into one easy-to-use website. I would encourage you to visit the following Internet site and show your support. For more information, click <http://www.dod.mil/americasupportsyou/>

[support/help.html](http://www.dod.mil/americasupportsyou/support/help.html).

## Inauguration of President George W. Bush

On January 20, George W. Bush will be sworn in for his second term as President of the United States. Many Kansans have inquired about how to receive tickets to watch the President's swearing in ceremony. My office will have a limited number of public tickets that you can receive by contacting my Washington, D.C. office at (202) 225-2715. Tickets are free but will be distributed on a first come, first served basis. I will do everything possible to accommodate as many people as possible, but I encourage you to contact my office early if you are interested and able to attend.

In the Office

Over the holiday season, we have been fortunate to have a number of Kansans in the office for a tour of the U.S. Capitol. In for tours were Ron and Angela Turner of Enterprise, and Travis Lenkner of Coats and Amanda Witty of Wakefield. Also in the office for tours were Todd and Jalue Smith with their children Eric, Ivy and Alicia of Salina.

Very truly yours,

Jerry